

Mishicot celebrates life of beloved American artist

Tony Berken portrays Norman Rockwell as he talks about his favorite Saturday Evening Post illustrations during a Norman Rockwell Weekend gathering Saturday afternoon at the Old School in Mishicot.

Sue Pischke/HTR



The Old School shows its collection of Norman Rockwell art while teaching guests about the famous painter's life

BY KEVIN BRALEY

Herald Times Reporter

MISHICOT — Melvin Kliment has never stopped learning at The Old School in Mishicot.

Kliment, 65, was a student when the building was a school, and later worked there as a teacher. On Saturday, Kliment returned as a student of Norman Rockwell — the artist famous for his

Saturday Evening Post covers. Rockwell illustrated the covers for almost 50 years. He died in 1978 at age 84.

"I was obviously aware of his paintings," Kliment, of Mishicot, said, "but I didn't know much about his life. This has stimulated an interest to learn more."

This is the fourth year the Norman Rockwell Weekend has been held at The Old School, 315 Eliza-

beth St., in Mishicot. The Old School has one of the largest displays of Norman Rockwell art in Wisconsin, according to owners Craig and Mary Berken. Last year, the Mishicot Area Growth and Improvement Committee became involved with the event to expand Norman Rockwell Weekend in the community.

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ROCKWELL

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On Friday and Saturday, Tony Berken of Green Bay — Craig's brother — portrayed Rockwell and spoke about the artist's life, answering questions posed by Craig Berken.

Tony Berken immersed himself in the life of Rockwell after his brother asked him to be a presenter during the event. This weekend marked his second year of involvement.

"I thought it was very good and effective," Kliment said. "The presentation was very interesting. It was very informative."

"It's not just a lecture, it's a trip through history."

Tony Berken has read books, magazine articles and watched videos about Rockwell's life, learning about his upbringing, his work ethic, his generosity and his love

Norman Rockwell weekend in Mishicot

The Norman Rockwell Weekend will continue today with presentations about the artist's life at noon and 3 p.m. at The Old School, 315 Elizabeth St., Mishicot.

for people. He said Rockwell's paintings have brought a message of hope and a smile to faces of millions of Americans in World War I, World War II and today.

"His art is timeless," Tony Berken said.

Mary and Craig Berken admit they didn't know much about Rockwell until they bought The Old School about three and a half years ago. The previous owners, Lyle and Carole Anderson, were Rockwell enthusiasts and sold the Berkens the exhibit along with the building.

The Andersons held Norman Rockwell

Day, which included sales on items, but the Berkens wanted to expand the event, Mary Berken said.

"I've come to appreciate his work," Mary Berken said about Rockwell.

Jim Sustman, president of the Mishicot Area Growth and Improvement Committee, said he wanted to get the community involved in Norman Rockwell Weekend. He said Mishicot should be proud of the Norman Rockwell display.

"We felt it was important to accent that," he said of the display.

In addition to The Old School, the Mishicot Historical Museum and Riveredge Galleries were open with extended hours and music performances.

Interviews with Tony Berken as Norman Rockwell will be held today at noon and 3 p.m.

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